



File Code: 2720

Date: October 4, 2019

Dear Interested Party,

The Aspen-Sopris Ranger District of the White River National Forest (WRNF) is soliciting comments on a proposal from Aspen Skiing Company (ASC) to replace their existing Big Burn chairlift at Snowmass Ski Area (Snowmass). This project is proposed within the Snowmass Special Use Permit area (SUP) and is consistent with the accepted 2015 Snowmass Mountain Master Development Plan (SMMDP). The attached map (**Figure 1**) depicts the project. Your comments on this proposal are being sought at this time. This information is also available on the project webpage:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56986>.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to replace the existing Big Burn chairlift, which is reaching the end of its operational lifetime after 33 years of use. The existing lift can no longer provide reliable and consistent access to existing intermediate terrain at Snowmass.

Proposed Action

Snowmass proposes to replace the Big Burn high-speed detachable quad chairlift with a new high-speed detachable six-person chairlift. The design capacity of the new chairlift would equal that of the existing chairlift (2,200 people per hour). The new chairlift would be installed in the same alignment as the existing chairlift; however, the bottom terminal would be moved approximately 250 feet uphill from the current location (see attached **Figure 1**). The adjustment of the bottom terminal would improve circulation and lift loading/unloading at the terminal. The proposed chairlift would be approximately 7,400 feet long and new lift carriers would be installed, potentially with retractable "bubble" covers to provide additional passenger comfort for the relatively exposed, high-elevation alignment.

Snowmass would use excavators, bulldozers, front-end loaders, skid steers, forklifts, cranes and helicopters in order to construct the top and bottom terminals and the line towers. Grading and construction of the top terminal would require approximately 0.5 acre of disturbance. The top terminal would be accessed via the existing Big Burn Work Road, which spans the upper portion of the existing chairlift (see attached **Figure 1**). Grading and construction of the bottom terminal would result in approximately 2.5 acres of disturbance. A new buried power line, measuring approximately 420 feet, would be installed to power the bottom terminal. New line towers and foundations would be installed in order to meet chairlift engineering codes, which have been updated since the original chairlift was installed. Installation of the concrete foundations would result in approximately 0.5 acre of disturbance. Concrete installation for the top terminal, bottom terminal, and line towers would be "tailgated" from a concrete truck or "trammed" into place via front-end loader or forklift. In total, the proposed project would result in approximately 3.5 acres of disturbance. All disturbed areas would be revegetated per ASC Revegetation Plan specifications upon completion of the project.

Construction staging would occur in an approximately 4-acre staging area upslope of the bottom terminal site, and an approximately 3-acre staging area near Powderhorn Saddle (see attached **Figure 1**). Staging areas would be used to store and stage all equipment and materials and to assemble the line



towers, terminals, and chair carriers. The staging areas would also be used to stage helicopters for line tower foundation placement and installation.

Categorical Exclusion

Due to the minimal amount of new disturbance associated with the proposed Snowmass Big Burn Chairlift Replacement Project, the WRNF is considering categorically excluding this project from analysis in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS). For a Proposed Action to be categorically excluded from further analysis in an EA or EIS, it must fit one of the categories contained in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 Chapter 30, and there can be no extraordinary circumstances related to the specific Proposed Action that would warrant further analysis. The proposal to replace the Big Burn chairlift fits into category 31.2 (3) "Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land."

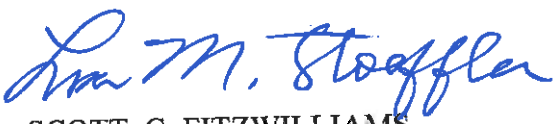
How to Comment and Timeframe

Written comments must be submitted via mail service, facsimile, electronic mail, or in person, and comments concerning this action will be most helpful if received by or before October 22, 2019. Written comments must be submitted to: Scott Fitzwilliams, c/o Monte Lutterman, Mountain Sports Ranger, Aspen-Sopris Ranger District, 620 Main Street, Carbondale, CO 81623, FAX (970) 963-1012. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or MS Word (.docx). Comments may also be submitted electronically at: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=56986>. Persons commenting should include: 1) name, address, telephone number, and organization represented, if any; 2) title of the project of concern (i.e., Snowmass Big Burn Chairlift Replacement Project); and 3) specific facts, concerns, or issues, and supporting reasons why they should be considered.

This public scoping period will be the only opportunity for individuals interested in or affected by this proposal to identify any potential extraordinary conditions or significant issues before the Responsible Official makes a decision.

Thank you for your interest in ski area management projects. To request further information on this Proposed Action, please contact Monte Lutterman, Mountain Sports Ranger, Aspen – Sopris Ranger District mlutterman@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,


 SCOTT G. FITZWILLIAMS
 Forest Supervisor

cc: Monte Lutterman, Curtis Keetch, Devon Cotsamire, Roger Poirier